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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 009488

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [IN](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: GOI WELCOMES IRAQ ELECTIONS

REF: A. STATE 225860

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 9223

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (U) On December 16, the DCM and D/PolCouns held a media briefing on the Iraqi elections, emphasizing the high voter turnout, the low levels of violence, and eager participation from Sunni voters who largely boycotted earlier elections. The December 15 polls were the most free and open ever seen in the Arab world, they highlighted. Most participants appeared to accept the historical significance of the elections, although some remained skeptical about the ability of Iraq to continue towards a peaceful democracy in light of ethnic tensions and questioned the strength of the resulting government.

[1](#)2. (C) Following up PolCouns's December 13 and 14 discussions urging early Indian commendation of Iraqi elections with West Asia Envoy Chinmaya Gharekhan and Joint Secretary (Gulf) Sanjay Singh, PolOff delivered Ref A

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demarche to Director (Gulf) Manohar Ram on December 16. Ram replied that MEA was in the process of clearing its statement welcoming the elections, and MEA's External Publicity division issued a strong statement of support later in the day calling the elections a "significant step forward" to "full sovereignty and democratic polity" and declaring the GOI "ready to cooperate in the reconstruction of Iraq" (full text in para 4). FS Saran told the Ambassador on December 15 that New Delhi would like to "engage fully" the Iraqi government on technical, administrative and economic training programs. Only the continued insecurity prevents the GOI from sending its Ambassador to Baghdad, Saran said, adding that the Iraqi government had expressed appreciation for the fact that India's Charge d'affaires was active in Baghdad, and not hunkered down.

Comment: Full Speed Ahead?

[1](#)3. (C) MEA's quick reaction to commend the Iraqi polling and Saran's wish to send New Delhi's Ambassador show renewed commitment in the GOI to developing normal relations with Iraq after a long period of hesitation. We will urge the GOI to move quickly to establish ties to the new government (after its formation) and get its intended assistance and cooperation programs on line. It would be helpful in this regard to have Washington's assessment of where India could best focus its assistance efforts, to include perhaps democratic institution building.

Text of MEA Statement

[1](#)4. (U) Statement issued by MEA on December 16:

The elections held in Iraq on December 15, 2005 represent a significant step forward in the Iraqi political process. It is noteworthy that all sections of the Iraqi population participated in this election which would lead to a more inclusive and broad-based Council of Representatives. Government of India welcomes this important development in Iraq's transition to full sovereignty and democratic polity and hopes that peace and political stability will soon be established in Iraq. It wishes the people of Iraq success in their efforts towards nation-building and is ready to cooperate in the reconstruction of Iraq.

[1](#)5. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:

(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)

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